United Nations A/59/PV.9

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Friday, 24 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Address by Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President De Menezes (*spoke in French*): As French is the most widely recognized official language in the Central Africa subregion, I should like to begin my statement by addressing a few words to the Assembly in that common language.

I would like to say how pleased I am to be here with you today, Mr. President — you in your capacity as the President of the General Assembly and me in mine as President of my country. I am also pleased to address the Assembly in order to speak on behalf of the people of Sao Tome and Principe.

I shall now deliver my address in Portuguese — which, as the Assembly is aware, is the official language of Sao Tome and Principe.

(*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*)

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you most warmly, Mr. President, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session on the General Assembly, whose proceedings will undoubtedly benefit from your personal qualities and your experience in international relations. Gabon and my country, Sao Tome and Principe, have long enjoyed a very good relationship of cooperation at various levels, and my delegation wishes you success in your new functions.

May I also thank the President's predecessor, President Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia, for the excellent work he has done.

On behalf of people of Sao Tome and Principe, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts and dedication at the service of the goals of the United Nations, and for his work in promoting peace and development.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place during a particularly complex international situation. Violence and the violation of human rights are increasing. The United Nations must play its role as a matter of priority; otherwise world order could collapse. More than ever before, Governments must give a universal forum like this the responsibility to rebuild international order on the basis of peace,

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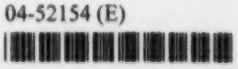

respect for human rights, security and cooperation for development. Unilateralism must be put aside. We have to work together for a better world.

Intolerance, terrorism, occupation, discrimination, organized crime and social injustice are some of the sources of today's open conflicts. Religious differences and drug trafficking in some countries are driving people to high levels of violence and destruction. We the people the United Nations have to do our best to stop those atrocities, or unprotected groups of society will disappear and the spiral of violence could spread out of control.

Darfur is an example of discrimination and atrocity. We call on Sudan's Government to fulfil all the provisions contained in Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), which was adopted on 30 July.

It is completely unacceptable that 50 million people worldwide have become refugees or have been internally displaced as a result of having been driven from their homes by war, persecution and human rights abuses. We now needed concrete action by leaders and peoples to ensure that the perpetrators of criminal behaviour are brought to justice, thereby rebuilding confidence among peoples and nations, but especially to address the root causes of violence.

Small island States will meet in Mauritius to assess the progress made since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Barbados. Progress in the implantation of the Barbados Programme of Action has been mixed. At Mauritius, key issues will be reviewed and decisions and recommendations will be made with regard to the questions of climate change, natural and environmental disasters, fresh water, land resources, waste management, tourism, energy, transport, biodiversity and coastal and marine resources. All those are issues affecting the ecosystems of small islands as a result of global warming. They can only be solved gradually and if the international community increases resources effectively to support the sustainable development of small island States. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the international community for everything it has done to date. I would like to extend a special thanks to the Government of Mauritius for its efforts to organize the special international conference.

As an island nation, Sao Tome and Principe continues to see its very existence threatened by global warming. Our shorelines are eroding and our national territory is shrinking as the seas rise. Is my small country to end up nothing but a tiny volcanic peak sticking out above the waves, with the last of our people clinging to the land left unclaimed by the rising sea? The Kyoto Protocol must be implemented by all for the benefit of all.

The Governments of Africa launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), aiming specifically at optimally mobilizing both African and international resources and at harmonizing contributions through a partnership based on mutual commitments and balanced interests and responsibilities. Peace, good governance, security and development are challenges that all African Governments and peoples have to face. They must create the conditions to achieve those goals. Those goals are far from being reached, given the numerous conflicts and the destructive and negatives effects of conflicts. My Government will continuously support NEPAD and will work to create the foundations for its implementation.

Most countries continue to face the challenge of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. In some parts of Africa HIV/AIDS is devastating entire families, societies, cultures and economies. Treatment is still expensive, and our economy has started to feel the negative effects of the disease. Unless there are additional resources and scientific investment to find a cure for HIV/AIDS, hope for progress in Africa will continue to be far from reach.

It is not only health problems that afflict poor countries. Globalization affects some because few have all the necessary conditions to develop trade and commerce and to take advantage of new technologies. The latest efforts by the World Trade Organization in Geneva are an example of the fact that those who have too much could make a difference by giving away a little to poor countries. If that is not done, we will continue to face discriminatory tariffs and to experience erosion in quality of life.

My country regrets that international relations in some parts of the world have deteriorated to the point where extreme violence, destruction and violation of human rights and the environment are daily facts of life, and where the use and abuse of dangerous weapons is endemic. We also regret that refugees and children are among the targets in those conflicts.

Tragedies cannot be our destiny. Tragedies and natural disasters such as the ones we face in Iraq, the

Middle East, Bangladesh and some countries in Africa and elsewhere are testimony of the fact that mankind is moving towards facing bigger challenges. My Government thinks that multilateralism under the framework of the United Nations is the only way for the international community to be able to achieve lasting peace and development.

Terrorism around the world is causing destruction, destabilizing Governments and killing people in places such as Madrid, the Middle East and elsewhere. We are confronted by a dilemma, because thus far all the strategies employed to fight this scourge are not producing significant results. Under the authority of the Security Council, we must guarantee the universality of, and compliance with, non-proliferation treaties.

My Government supports the recommendations of Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Timor-Leste. The United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor is a success we cannot ignore.

The universality of the Organization must be a fact, and all countries have to be represented. Taiwan is not represented. We call upon the international community to address the issue of Taiwan's representation. Despite its small size, Taiwan offers development aid to a large number of countries. Taiwan has all the elements to be an active member of the main international organizations. A look at its economy, trade relations, commerce, finance, application of new technologies and support for many countries reveals facts that we cannot ignore any longer.

We would also like to refer to Cuba. Economic embargo is a severe sanction. It violates the Charter of the United Nations and international law. I would like to request that the General Assembly lend its assistance to bring about an end to the economic embargo against Cuba. The cold war era is behind us, and a people in need simply cannot continue to be the object of the political interest of part of the electorate in Florida.

In Sao Tome and Principe we are working very hard to consolidate our young democracy and to create a solid foundation for sound development. Following the agreement signed among the Government, the international community and the military — which mounted a coup in Sao Tome and Principe in 2003 — we organized a national forum that brought all segments of our society to the table to bring their views closer together and to draw up recommendations in order to avoid more instability in the country.

On the economic front, we are preparing the country for a new era based on oil exploration and production. Our National Assembly has adopted a law on the management of the revenues that we will eventually receive from oil companies. That shows that corruption will be fought, that the new generation will be protected and that the country will have enough resources for development.

The Government and the people of Sao Tome and Principe adhere to the principles of respect for the sovereignty of all countries and following the path of dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding among peoples. We call on all members of the United Nations to do likewise for the sake of a better world.

I would like to conclude by expressing our gratitude to all countries Members of the United Nations for the support given to our country at the time of the first-ever coup d'état in Sao Tome and Principe, in June 2003. I would also like to thank all the countries of Central Africa — including Congo (Brazzaville), which currently presides over the Economic Community of Central African States — for everything they have done. I also wish to thank the President of the General Assembly and our partners in Central Africa and the African Union for their tireless efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to

the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Crvenkovski: Allow me at the outset to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. Jean Ping, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and to express my conviction that this session will be concluded successfully under your presidency. Moreover, I take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the fifty-eighth session, Mr. Julian Hunte, on his dedication and on the successful fulfilment of his responsibilities.

Last year was extremely challenging, for both the world community and the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efforts and contributions in preserving peace in the world. In his recent address (see A/59/PV.3), he clearly demonstrated once again his dedication to the cause of the Organization.

We certainly all agree that the United Nations continues to be the most relevant global forum addressing international peacekeeping and security issues. We also agree on the need to renew and reform its bodies and agendas in order to preserve the vital role of the Organization. In that context, we look forward to reading the report being drafted by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was created by the Secretary-General.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, the Republic of Macedonia considers it extremely important to increase the membership of the Council with regard to both permanent and non-permanent seats.

The renewal and strengthening of the role of the Economic and Social Council is equally relevant. The Republic of Macedonia has presented its candidacy for the election to the Economic and Social Council to be held during this session. We are confident that, if elected and with the support of the General Assembly, my country will be able to make its full contribution to improving the efficiency of the Council.

As far as the revitalization of the General Assembly is concerned, we think that we must seize the momentum, implement the provisions of the revised agenda and pursue efforts to make the work of the Main Committees more focused and rational.

Unfortunately, once again this year, inhuman acts of terrorism have continued to take innocent lives and to preoccupy world public opinion. We were all horrified by the images of human suffering in Madrid, Beslan and elsewhere. In order to enhance the capacity of the international community in this respect, we need to further consolidate the world anti-terrorist coalition led by the United Nations and, additionally, strengthen cooperation with regional organizations that have specific mechanisms to fight this global evil.

The Republic of Macedonia will continue its active cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council and make its own contribution to the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001). In that regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that, last May, the Republic of Macedonia ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the major threats to international peace and security, and it is closely related to terrorism. We welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The implementation of that resolution will complement the existing set of instruments and consolidate the role of the Security Council in this area.

The suppression of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines are also very important issues, given the size of the problem and the number of victims caused by mines. Doing so will contribute greatly to conflict prevention and successful peacekeeping and peace-building throughout the world, including our region. At the end of last year, the Republic of Macedonia conducted a successful effort to collect small arms and light weapons. That effort had the support of the United Nations Development Programme. Efforts in this regard are ongoing.

We expect that the first review conference of countries parties to the Ottawa Convention, which is to be held in Nairobi, will produce a summary of the results achieved through the implementation of that extremely important instrument, which will pave the way to the creation of a world free of landmines.

The Republic of Macedonia has destroyed its mine stockpiles and is working on the demining of affected regions. The United Nations Mine Action Service, together with the International Trust Fund for

Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, have provided a great deal of help in our demining activities.

Unfortunately, violent conflicts have continued this year. The armed conflict in Darfur and the terrible humanitarian tragedy it brought about require decisive action. We support the Security Council resolution in this regard, and we join the call for further and urgent action on this matter.

The situation in the Middle East continues to keep the world on edge. We support the efforts of the Quartet to find a solution acceptable to all sides and we share the conviction that the road map is the only way to reach a solution for Palestine and Israel, two neighbouring States that will one day live in peace.

Building peace and fostering democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the Republic of Macedonia is part of the multinational force, remains a challenge facing both the international community and the peoples of those two countries. I would like to emphasize the exceptional importance of the implementation of resolution 1546 (2004), which endorsed the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty and provided the core framework for the political transformation and democratization of that State.

With regard to Iraq, I would like to appeal to the authorities of that country to do their utmost to find the three Macedonian citizens who have disappeared there.

The Millennium Development Goals remain the key challenge for the Organization. In September 2005, heads of State and Government from around the world will meet to review what has been done in realizing the Goals in the five years since the adoption of the Millennium Summit Declaration. It is crystal clear that we must take decisive steps if we want to mobilize political will and resources and carry out reforms on the national and global levels to meet the Goals by 2015.

However, it is already clear that some regions of the world will find it very difficult to achieve the projected Goals. Special attention should be dedicated to Africa, where the situation is alarming and the issues of poverty and hunger eradication and the problem of AIDS are very serious. Achieving the Goals will not be possible unless the international community is ready to assume its share of responsibility in that respect.

The Republic of Macedonia places special emphasis on the importance of effective respect for, and promotion of, human rights as one of the pillars of every democratic society. The rule of law and effective respect for human rights are the best instrument in preventing conflicts, as well as prerequisites for peace and prosperity. Today, we are increasingly aware of the need to nurture and respect multiculturalism as a precondition to the development of a secure and harmonious world. In that regard, every effort should be made to create mutual confidence and understanding and to promote respect for differences. The Republic of Macedonia is deeply committed to those principles, and we adhere to them strictly in our actions.

For half a century now, the United Nations has had a key role in the development of international human rights law. In that context, we welcome current efforts to harmonize the draft international convention to protect the rights of disabled persons.

Good-neighbourly relations are one of the foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Macedonia, as one of the promoters of regional cooperation in South-East Europe. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, as during previous sessions, the delegation of the Republic of Macedonia will propose the adoption by the General Assembly of a draft resolution on good-neighbourly relations, stability and development in South-Eastern Europe.

In recent years, the countries of the region have made considerable progress at both the domestic level and in developing mutual relations. We are actively cooperating in numerous regional initiatives and in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic integration process. However, despite the considerable progress made at the level of stabilization and improved security in the region, not all sources of potential instability have been eliminated. We strongly believe that the process of the region's accelerated integration into the European Union and NATO will weaken existing threats at the national and regional levels.

As an immediate neighbouring country, the Republic of Macedonia is following with particular attention the developments in Kosovo. We fully support the United Nations policy of standards before status, whose final goal is to establish a true multi-ethnic community and to improve security, democratization and the rule of law. At the same time, the Republic of Macedonia is also lending its continued support to the United Nations and other international bodies as they carry out their responsible missions.

We have developed contractual cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in various areas, with a view to resolving concrete issues that are relevant to the population. We expect very soon to start the process of the demarcation of our border with Kosovo. Also with regard to Kosovo, I would like to emphasize the fact that any decision on its future status must not result in the destabilization of the region.

The Republic of Macedonia is going through a critical stage in the process of carrying out fundamental economic and social reforms and transforming its society to prepare it for accelerated integration into the European Union. The finalization of the implementation of the framework agreement concluded in 2001 is a priority in that process. Most of the legal regulations resulting from the constitutional changes flowing from the framework agreement have already been adopted. Nevertheless, one of the main issues pertaining to decentralization — namely, territorial reorganization — could pose a challenge, given the upcoming referendum. That referendum is a democratic event of the highest order that provides citizens with an opportunity to express their opinions on the concept being put forth by the Government.

Finally, I would like to conclude by saying that the world is facing a range of challenges and threats, but that our experience so far has proven that there is no alternative to the multilateral approach to overcoming threats to international peace and security. Our experience has also proven that dialogue remains the most valuable and powerful instrument in our endeavours to create a different and safer world.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aliyev: I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for his exemplary stewardship of the Assembly during his presidency of the fifty-eighth session.

At the Millennium Summit, Member States committed themselves to a shared vision of global solidarity and common security. We reaffirmed our faith in the United Nations and its Charter as indispensable for a more peaceful, secure and just world. As we have entered the new century we have done our best to maintain the vital importance of international law, so that all countries may be able to count on the Organization in their hour of need and so that, in turn, the United Nations can fulfil what the world expects from it.

Some of our actions sought to protect millions of innocent people, especially women and children, who still fall victim to brutal armed conflicts. Others endeavoured to establish a more equitable world economy, where all countries must have equal chances at fair competition.

Azerbaijan is making its own contribution to the strengthening of global and regional security. As an active member of the global coalition against international terrorism, Azerbaijan is faithfully cooperating, bilaterally and within multilateral frameworks, to suppress this evil that continues to bring death and suffering to innocent peoples. Azerbaijan is among the countries that have suffered directly from the consequences of armed conflicts on its territory. In reality those conflicts are interlinked, and we have no other choice but to face them in cooperation and unity. There should be no room for double standards.

Since the very day it became a member of the United Nations, Azerbaijan has constantly drawn the attention of the international community to the conflict

between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and to the occupation by Armenia of Azerbaijani territories. Azerbaijan expected the United Nations to compel the aggressor to move out of its land and to allow the expelled Azerbaijani population to return to their homes. I should like to recall that, in 1993, the Security Council unanimously adopted four resolutions — resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — in response to Armenia's occupation of sovereign Azerbaijani territories.

Those resolutions confirmed that the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan, resolutely called for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and its internationally recognized borders, and underlined the inadmissibility of the use of force for the purpose of acquiring territory. The resolutions demanded an immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from all occupied areas of Azerbaijan and called for the establishment of conditions for the safe return of displaced people to their places of permanent residence.

None of those resolutions — which were intended to restore justice and peace and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan — has been implemented by Armenia, which never respected or recognized the fundamental principles of international law contained in the resolutions that laid down the basis for the settlement of the conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other regions of Azerbaijan, which make up 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan, have been occupied by Armenia for more than 10 years. As a result of the policy of ethnic cleansing conducted by Armenia, more than 1 million of Azerbaijan's people have become refugees or internally displaced persons.

The silence of the Security Council has had a devastating impact on the resettlement process. Armenia has ignored the resolutions and has attempted to consolidate the results of its military aggression — and it has not been punished for it. Armenia consequently launched an outrageous policy involving massive illegal settlement of an Armenian population in occupied Azerbaijani territories. That also is a blatant violation of international law, and in particular of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Moreover, the situation has deteriorated, with those territories being used for drug trafficking, arms transfers, the harbouring of terrorists, illegal economic activities and smuggling. The occupied Azerbaijani territories have become a kind of grey zone out of the control of Azerbaijan's Government and free from any international monitoring.

The self-proclaimed, non-recognized so-called Nagorno-Karabakh republic is a constant threat to peace and security in the whole region. Armenian aggressors and Nagorno-Karabakh separatists are also exploiting natural resources in the occupied Azerbaijani territories and are attempting to engage overseas companies in their illegal business. I call upon Member States to take all necessary measures to make their nationals and companies respect international law and to prevent them from illegal activities on the territory of our country. For its part, Azerbaijan will undertake all necessary legal and practical measures to hold those companies accountable for participation in the stealing of the natural wealth belonging to a sovereign nation.

Furthermore, Armenia is falsifying history and misappropriating the cultural and architectural heritage of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Religious and historical monuments, ancient manuscripts and other cultural properties have been destroyed, refashioned, plundered or removed.

The process of political settlement of the conflict that has been conducted within the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during the last 12 years has thus far yielded no results. No serious consideration has been given by the Minsk Group to the implementation of the Security Council's resolutions, to assessing the situation on the ground or to the illegal activities carried out by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

It is obvious that, under the current passive and silent attitude of the United Nations, the Security Council, the OSCE and the Minsk Group, and without strong pressure from the international community, Armenia will not abandon its aggressive and destructive stance. The illegal actions of Armenia in occupied Azerbaijani territories and its position in the negotiating process prove that Armenia is not intent on finding a solution to the problem. Rather, it intends to further prolong the negotiations and to consolidate the results of its aggression, while trying ultimately to impose a fait-accompli-based settlement.

I wish to stress from this podium that a settlement of this issue must be based only on international law and democracy, not on ethnic cleansing and the de

facto annexation of the territory of a sovereign State. Azerbaijan will never accept the occupation of its territory, the violation of its territorial integrity or the results of ethnic cleansing.

The return of Azerbaijan's displaced population to their homes remains one of our key priorities in the process of settling the conflict. But even before our expelled people, refugees and internally displaced persons come back home, there is still an urgent need for all the relevant United Nations agencies, donor countries and international humanitarian organizations to be actively involved in addressing the suffering of the most affected part of population.

The Government of Azerbaijan does not spare time, effort or financial resources to do its part; but given the scale of displacement, that is not sufficient. Burden-sharing between the Government and relevant international organizations is crucial. In addition to purely material support, we also request a renewal of international attention to the problem and better coordination on the part of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as efforts by all international organizations. We expect a more responsive strategy by the United Nations with regard to the state of the forgotten humanitarian crisis in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the objectives of poverty eradication and to the promotion of good governance. On that basis, and as a result of the measures we have undertaken, we are currently seeing increased economic performance and growth. Azerbaijan is making its contribution to the development of transregional cooperation. We are also promoting such transportation and communication networks as the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia project and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzerum oil and gas pipelines. Those projects will ensure predictable access for the exports of land-locked countries to world and regional markets.

The United Nations has to adapt itself in order to successfully tackle all the challenges it faces. The long-standing issue of United Nations reform needs finally to be resolved. The inability of the Security Council to cope with problems, and particularly those related to armed conflicts, is obvious. The new Security Council should be more representative, responsible and democratic. Its working methods must be more transparent and able to respond more rapidly to the new challenges, risks and threats of the twenty-first century. Developing viable mechanisms for the implementation of Security Council resolutions is also a pressing issue.

It is the obligation of all of us to collectively apply effective approaches to current problems, thereby enabling a stable environment for the sustainable growth and democratic development of nations. That can only be achieved through strengthening the norms and principles of international law and through friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation among States.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): The fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly coincides with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the independence of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The last quarter of a century has presented a mighty challenge for the people of my country: to develop in a world increasingly indifferent to the particular problems of small, poor, developing States. But it is a challenge that the citizens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have embraced with courage, fortitude and hope —

never doubting our ability to survive, thrive and ultimately prosper as we contribute to the uplifting of our unique, independent, distinctive and noble Caribbean civilization. Our country has made progress thus far, but much more remains to be done. We look forward to succeeding in our quest for self-mastery.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will perform your duties with dignity and skill. Let me just say that you have a hard act to follow. Your predecessor, our Mr. Julian Hunte, is a distinguished son of the Caribbean who hails from our sister island, Saint Lucia. He made us proud in his role as President of the General Assembly.

The peoples of the Caribbean and the southern United States are still traumatized by the devastation caused by hurricanes this season. Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Cuba and other Caribbean countries, including my own, have been severely affected. But our nearest neighbour, Grenada, has suffered cataclysmic destruction and is now in a state of national crisis. We offer our profound condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have died in the hurricanes. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other Caribbean nations have reached out a helping hand to Grenada, but the magnitude of the devastation in that country on 7 September is beyond the capacity of the Caribbean to address satisfactorily by itself. Indeed, Grenada has become an international responsibility.

I therefore reiterate the call of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for the urgent convening of an international donors' conference to address the matter of Grenada's utter devastation and its reconstruction. Simply put, Grenada has moved from the status of a middle-income developing country with a modern, sophisticated society and well run, democratic State machinery to a devastated land in a matter of three hours of pounding from hurricane Ivan. Today in Grenada there is no functioning economy and a highly traumatized civil society.

Arising from all that is a strategic issue in our quest to turn Grenada's setback into a regional advance for a more profound and meaningful Caribbean integration. Hurricane Ivan has spoken eloquently to the fact that nature has made our region one. History has further moulded us as one people who were drawn originally from diverse lands and cultures. Yet we in the Caribbean continue to buck, rather than accommodate ourselves appropriately to, both nature and history. That is a sort of vanity that we can ill-afford.

It is tragic that it takes a catastrophe of this nature to hammer home the point that the small island developing States have been making for some time, namely, that there is a need for special and differential treatment because of, among other things, our vulnerability to natural disasters.

I repeat, without exaggeration, that Hurricane Ivan, in a few short hours, reduced Grenada to rubble and, at a stroke, undid the hard work and achievements of its people since independence in 1974. We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines feel their pain and know that, but for the grace of God and the vagaries of nature, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would have suffered the same fate.

Accordingly, the crisis in Grenada, occasioned by nature, prompts Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to give the highest priority to the international conference to be held in Mauritius in January of next year, when the specific and distinct problems of small island developing States will be highlighted. We will be stressing the need for the international community to take urgent action on the problem of global warming and climate change, which, if left unchecked, could lead to a global human and economic calamity in this century. The international community must become focused on the avoidance of that threatened apocalypse.

Since we met here last year, the Caribbean Community has faced another crisis in our region — this time, a political one — as one of our member States, Haiti, descended into chaos, violence and anarchy. We saw an elected head of State removed in circumstances that bring no credit to our hemisphere. We remain deeply troubled by the controversial interruption of the democratic process that took place in the early hours of the morning of 28 February this year in Port-au-Prince. It is worth remembering that CARICOM States were instrumental in preparing a plan of Action for Haiti to ensure that the Constitution of that country was respected and to create the basis for a mobilization of resources to avert a humanitarian disaster.

On 25 February 2004, CARICOM was successful in having the matter raised at a meeting of the Security Council. On that occasion, we went to the Council armed with a draft resolution. We pleaded for the

international community to respond to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti. The draft resolution presented by CARICOM to the Security Council was noted but politely ignored. The rest is history. The Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are anxious to help the Haitian people in the sorry plight in which they currently find themselves. But before engaging politically with the so-called interim Government of Haiti, we must see, among other things, unequivocal evidence on the ground of advances in democracy and freedom and credible guarantees of free and fair elections within a reasonable time. A regime that tries an indicted murderer at midnight, one who was hailed by the very regime as a liberator, and then frees him before the first cock crows, has failed the most elemental tests of justice, freedom and democracy.

The death and destruction occasioned by Hurricane Jean in Haiti demand our humanitarian assistance, not our political engagement with the Haitian regime.

The dire situation in the Darfur region of Sudan has caused great distress to the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. My own personal grief prompted me to write letters in May of this year to several world leaders, including Secretary-General Kofi Annan, offering the slender resources of my country to assist in whatever small way we could to alleviate the suffering of the afflicted Sudanese people. Most of those I addressed responded positively. It is true that — thanks in large measure to the diligence of various journalists and the news media — this tragedy has now been brought forcefully to international attention. But the question we must nevertheless ask ourselves is this: has the international community reacted in an appropriate way to this calamity, or have we merely engaged in the usual perfunctory and routine denunciations? The images and reports coming out of Darfur are a chilling reminder of man's inhumanity to man and a haunting condemnation of those who can truly help but who stand by idly or downplay this humanitarian disaster callously. In that regard, the Government of Sudan must shoulder its responsibility to its citizens and to humanity.

Three months have gone by since I wrote to the Secretary-General, and this massive human tragedy continues to unfold before our appalled eyes. I suggest that we cannot allow the bloodbath to continue. We must save those who can still be saved in what have become the killing fields of Africa. The genocide of yesterday in Rwanda stands as a monument of shame to the international community. As an international community we must today take the shame out of our eyes in Darfur with urgent practical measures.

A similar effort is required to address the harsh conditions of life of other peoples, including the heroic nation of Palestine, whose humanity is being daily assailed by outside forces.

I would like to express, on behalf of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, our deepest sympathy to the Government and people of the Russian Federation on the tragic and inexplicable events in Beslan on 3 September. A tragedy of that magnitude, and especially the slaughter of so many innocent children, cannot fail to cause heartfelt sorrow.

Since 11 September 2001, the fight against international terrorism has intensified on all fronts. It is right and proper that rich and poor countries be engaged in the ongoing war on the barbarism of terror. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a reliable partner in the global struggle against the evil of terrorism. Still, it is necessary for me to point out that the cost of being a reliable participant in that war is a heavy burden on the meagre resources of developing countries like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Our international obligations and circumstances necessarily pull us into that war, which we did not occasion or initiate. Yet we bear that imposed burden with equanimity and pain.

This body, however, must be reminded yet again that there is another terrorism that we must fight relentlessly. It is the terrorism of war, poverty, illiteracy and disease, including HIV/AIDS. We must never forget, either, that daily hunger for 1 billion persons worldwide is truly a weapon of mass destruction. Together we must fight that terrorism too. Developed countries cannot allow trade regimes and market conditions to further impoverish the poor, as has been the case with banana farmers in the Caribbean, and still trumpet that they are helping the poor.

The case for a judicious and balanced reform of the United Nations to better reflect the reality of the twenty-first century is unanswerably strong. We must redouble our collective efforts to persuade those who fear, unreasonably, the consequences of a just reform. We must not permit entrenched power to defeat right reason.

Since Saint Vincent and the Grenadines became an independent State, it has had unbroken diplomatic

relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan. We see that country of liberty and democracy as a most important component of the magnificent Chinese civilization. Taiwan has the world's seventeenth largest economy and the fifteenth largest trading volume internationally, and is third in the global ranking of the extent of foreign exchange reserves held. Taiwan's 23 million people ought properly to be represented in this universal body by the Government of their choice. It is a mistake to continue to deny Taiwan international membership of organizations. The relations between Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Taiwan have been exemplary. Our friendship demands that we plead their just cause.

I conclude with these observations. Some States boast ownership of boundless territory, vast natural resources and potent firepower; but none of those factors by themselves, or a combination of all three, guarantee peace or prosperity. In some other States poverty, hunger conflict and disease are the norm. If, instead of investing in war — knowing its certain side effect of the waste of young, innocent lives — nations cooperated with each other, striving for ways to solve problems common to all, it is just possible that the world we bequeath to our children will be more peaceful and richer in the ways that matter and boasting cleaner air and a healthier environment. Internationally, and in our own countries, let us emphasize the power of love rather than the love of power. Let us extol not the rightness of power but the righteousness contained in our human condition.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Qarase (Fiji): I would like to extend to the General Assembly the warm greetings and good wishes of the Government and people of the Republic of the Fiji Islands. I would also like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session. I pledge to you our support and cooperation. That reflects our respect for your country, with which we have enjoyed close relations through our common membership of the African, Caribbean and Pacific partnership with the European Union. I also wish to express Fiji's warm thanks to Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia for his very able leadership of the fifty-eighth session. Fiji and other small island nations of the Pacific region applaud the fine example set by the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in their shared approach to managing the responsibilities of that high office.

Today we are confronted by events that cast a shadow over humankind and the United Nations vision of peace. The humanitarian crisis in Sudan continues. As relief efforts proceed, our thoughts are with the refugees of Darfur. We urge the Government of Sudan to do everything in its power to bring that tragedy to an end.

We think of those whose lives have been devastated by the destructive fury of hurricanes in the Caribbean and on the Atlantic coast of the United States. We extend to them our deepest sympathies for the loss of life and property.

The perpetrators of the slaughter of innocents in Russia gave a new dimension to wickedness. They defeated their own cause through the ruthless and indiscriminate shedding of the blood of children. Nothing can justify what they did. The United Nations must be united against such infamy.

Let us express our sympathy and solidarity with the ordinary people of Iraq caught in that country's terrible cycle of violence. Let this forum give them our full and unreserved support in the struggle for genuine democratic Government and the regaining of their national sovereignty. May their hopes for a peaceful future and lasting stability find fulfilment.

We feel for the families of the people killed by terrorists outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta. We

want them to know that their pain is shared in this family of nations.

The plea from Fiji is for United Nations member countries to strengthen their joint resolve to oppose political terror everywhere. This is a critical time in history. The United Nations is called upon to mobilize all its experience, skills and powers to create concord among nations. That was its founding principle. It is the principle that must continue to drive and sustain the United Nations.

Fiji, as always, is committed to the maintenance of peace and security and to a world free of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

We want an end to ozone-depleting pollution and the elimination of other hazards to the environment.

The international community must continue to fight poverty and disease. HIV/AIDS has become more than a health crisis. For some countries it is now a security threat. We in the Pacific have no immunity from this global epidemic. We would welcome continued assistance from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to supplement our regional campaign to contain this scourge.

The United Nations must continue to resist external interference in any form, which undermines the sovereign right of every Member State to determine its own destiny. However, where there are internal crises and disorder and the United Nations mandates intervention for peace, we are ready to contribute. We consider it an honour to serve the cause of peace under the flag of the United Nations and regional organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum. Fiji's soldiers and police officers have been taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1978. That has cost us 35 precious lives, but we remain strong in our resolve to continue serving where we are needed. Peacekeeping personnel from Fiji are working in Liberia, the Sinai, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. My Government is now giving careful consideration to requests from the United Nations to assist it with security personnel in Iraq.

I would like to take this opportunity to express to the United Nations and to those countries that have assisted Fiji on a bilateral basis our gratitude for their help in making it possible for us to honour our commitment to international peace and security.

Through the Pacific Islands Forum, and with the assistance of Australia and New Zealand, we are currently preparing a Pacific plan to pool resources and efforts for the strengthening of collective interests. We will come together to combat the threat of terror and to improve law enforcement and our defences against terrorism and transnational crime. There will be a cooperative approach to social and economic development, and especially for advancing trade, investment and tourism. We will stand united to guard our oceanic heritage, which is a treasure for all humanity.

Our region has the world's largest remaining, sustainable tuna fishery, which is an essential source of food for the global market. But more than 95 per cent of the value of the mid-Pacific Ocean tuna catch goes to distant-water fishing nations. We look to the United Nations and other international organizations to help us get a just return from that major natural resource. Fiji commends those countries that have already worked with us to reach that goal. We would like to express particular thanks to the United States for its regional fisheries treaty with certain Pacific island nations. Our island countries have now entered a new phase of cooperation in the tuna industry through the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention, which came into effect in June this year.

In addition to reinforcing regional cooperation, Fiji and its neighbours are giving special attention to their relationships with countries in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

We strongly support a role for Japan and India in an enlarged and strengthened Security Council. May I also add that Fiji would endorse the inclusion of South Africa and Brazil as permanent members.

Let me say that we greatly value the assistance of Australia, New Zealand and the United States in securing our region as a zone of peace.

It was heartening to see the two Koreas marching and participating under a single banner at the Olympic Games in Greece. It is our prayer that that will lead to more substantive progress in the reunification of the Korean people.

We are glad to see the People's Republic of China growing in stature and developing so quickly. Fiji enjoys steadily strengthening relations with China and wants to see those relations expanded further. It is committed to its diplomatic recognition and official relations with the

People's Republic of China. At the same time, Fiji values its trade and economic ties with Taiwan. It is our fervent hope that their people will resolve their future peacefully through dialogue and consensus.

For the past 29 years, close to 80 countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) have been the beneficiaries of a historic development partnership with the European Union. I pay tribute to the leaders of Europe and the ACP who pioneered that unique international North-South arrangement. Generous assistance in trade, aid and investment has contributed in very significant ways to the livelihood of millions of people from poorer States.

Now, as we begin negotiations with the European Union for the continuation of those arrangements, we are finding to our dismay that the World Trade Organization's (WTO) insistence on free and open trade will effectively mean for many ACP countries, including Fiji, a massive loss in export earnings from reduced prices. For our sugar industry the direct consequence will inevitably be that the price the cane farmers receive will fall substantially below their production costs. That is despite the urgent and comprehensive reforms we have embarked upon in our sugar industry to make it more productive, efficient and competitive.

Those WTO hurdles are made more difficult by the loss of competitive margins through the withdrawal of schemes like the Generalized System of Preferences. The consequence is that many small island developing States, already disadvantaged by their smallness, distance from export markets and regular devastation from natural disasters, are now faced with serious uncertainty over their economic prospects. We therefore welcome the holding by the United Nations of a special conference of small island developing States early next year to review the Programme of Action for those countries, the Barbados + 10 review. I very much hope that review will lead to new international commitments of assistance to disadvantaged small island developing States. Those commitments must underpin economic survival and a sustainable future, as the world moves inexorably towards a free and open trading system. It is also our hope that the Barbados + 10 review will renew the call for those States that have yet to sign or to ratify the Kyoto Protocol to do so, for the sake of our planet.

My Government commends the initiative taken by the International Labour Organization in its World Commission Report on the Social Dimension of Globalization. It is the international community's responsibility to ensure that for both developed and developing countries, and for big and small countries alike, globalization means a fair and equitable spread of opportunities — opportunities manifested in new investments, more jobs, decent work and improvements in education, health and other social amenities.

For us in the Pacific, as small island nations, there is another area of increased concern. We take great pride in our culture, customs and traditions. They give us our identity and oneness as indigenous communities and as Pacific island peoples. I appeal to the General Assembly to bring before it for adoption at the earliest opportunity the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I request the Secretary-General to expedite that process.

While we acknowledge the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments in the promotion of human rights, we also recognize that they are primarily concerned with the rights of individuals. Indigenous Pacific island communities see a United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as being vitally important for the international recognition and acceptance of our right to self-determination and, indeed, to our very survival as ethnically and culturally distinct peoples. But that is not to say that we are unconcerned about other communities whose members are fellow citizens with equal rights and responsibilities.

Members of the Assembly are aware that Fiji has a multiracial society. The ethnic Fijians and Rotumans are the indigenous community. Collectively and communally, they own close to 90 per cent of all land in the country. Settlers from India came some 125 years ago and now comprise the majority of tenants of native land. Europeans, people of mixed ancestry, Chinese and other Pacific islanders complete Fiji's colourful cultural tapestry. We are proud of that national diversity. It gives our country its distinctive character and its still unrealized potential.

Although we have learned to co-exist without the racial violence and hatred common elsewhere, we are still a country divided, especially in politics. From independence, in 1970, we tried hard to create multiracialism founded on mutual respect, mutual care

and understanding. But, unfortunately, during elections the overwhelming majority of voters still make their choices along ethnic lines. It is not because they are against candidates from other communities, it is just that they find security and comfort in choosing representatives from their own community.

Since my Government came to office, in 2001, we have been engaged in a new quest for unity. Our vision is for a peaceful, unified and prosperous Fiji. Politically, we wish to build on the concept of guaranteed representation for our different communities in Parliament. The challenge now is to extend this to representation in Government.

As a parliamentary democracy, we are committed to Government based on the free will and consent of the people. But, at the same time, we want to ensure that each community has a direct voice in national decision-making. It is that desire for inclusion and equity that has led us to adopt measures to close the social and economic gap between Fijians and the other communities and between the affluent and the disadvantaged and the poor. Increasingly, we are finding that faith in God is a powerful instrument for forming bonds across the racial divide. We may follow different beliefs, but a common focus on the divine is lighting the way forward.

When I return to Fiji, the country will be getting ready for eight days of prayer, forgiveness and reconciliation. The aim is to bring people together and to create a sense of national purpose and patriotism. All the great faiths represented in Fiji will be part of that. Each contains in their teachings the jewels of truth that gleam for all humanity. Each has an important capacity for peace-making. Each can make a valuable contribution to increasing understanding and resolving differences.

In those eight days in October, therefore, our religious leaders will join with other citizens of good will in this fresh search for togetherness. The promotion of unity has been a pressing national priority since my Government came to office, four years ago. We understand that it will not come quickly. The General Assembly will be pleased to hear that our communities themselves, through their religious and cultural organizations, are coming forward to join with the Government in the making of a unified State. The climax of our national week of prayer and forgiveness will be an interfaith service. We recognize that human effort alone is not enough for what we want to achieve.

Just as this great Organization seeks a world of harmony bound together by common ideals, we in Fiji want our own United Nations, a united nation where our citizens live together happily and nationhood is fulfilled.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Skerrit (Dominica): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the mantle of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation in bringing about the successful outcome of this session.

My Government expresses its deepest appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the outstanding manner in which he presided over the work of the fifty-eighth session. Under his visionary leadership, significant progress was made in advancing the revitalization of the General Assembly and in ensuring the return of development to the forefront of the issues addressed by the Assembly.

No words of praise are adequate to describe the yeoman's task undertaken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. In an international environment of turmoil and a world going through the turbulence of economic reconstruction as globalization proceeds, the Secretary-General has remained a clear, calm and moderating influence on all parties to conflict. His level-headed approach has done much to ensure the relevance of the United Nations, which the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica cherish highly.

The numerous challenges facing the globalized world demand a common endeavour from all the nations of the world. Guaranteeing human rights, peace and security and ensuring social and economic justice for all require international cooperation and concerted multilateral action.

Dominica is of the firm conviction that the United Nations continues to be the global institution most suited to the pursuit and coordination of these global initiatives. The multilateral institutions, however, need to be reformed if they are going to be relevant in the current global dispensation.

The coordination of the United Nations effort, in harmony with national efforts, must be the focus of this institution if it is to positively impact on the lives of the majority — the vulnerable and marginalized people of the world.

Dominica is a small island State with all the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of countries with small economies. That is why we look to the United Nations as a forum in which small countries can air their views, with the aim of collectively influencing the agenda of the Organization in some way.

The central question for all countries in the world today relates to the kind of arrangements that will constitute the economic order when the globalization process is complete. At this stage, globalization consists of a wide variety of treaties, some bilateral and others multilateral. From this slew of agreements, there is yet to be discerned a clear set of principles that address the idiosyncratic features of small island States when they function as economic units.

Within the past six years, the economy of my country has had to withstand a number of shocks — the byproducts of multilateral treaties to which States in situations similar to that of my country have had only a minuscule input. A dispute between the United States of America and the European Union resulted in a ruling by the World Trade Organization that destroyed the banana industry, which was the backbone of the economy of Dominica.

A subsequent decision by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to publish what has been described as a "blacklist" had a very adverse impact upon the offshore banking sector in my country.

Dominica would like to make a plea for greater transparency and inclusiveness in the formulation of agreements which relate to development financing, trade and international tax matters. Participation ought to be substantive, not a mere formality, which is the case more often than not. We do not subscribe to the notion that mere presence constitutes significant participation.

Notwithstanding our participation in multilateral institutions, the two shocks to which I referred were exogenous — originating outside our country and having nothing to do with the internal economic management of Dominica. A resolute commitment on the part of the resilient population of Dominica, with the timely help of some friendly countries and institutions, saved our country from total disaster.

The lesson, which is abundantly clear to my country and to other small States, is that a new global economic order must be balanced and sensitive to the interests of its weakest members.

The situation of small island developing States will be the focus of attention in January 2005, when the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action convenes in Mauritius. The Barbados+10 Meeting will afford us the opportunity to make a full assessment of the Programme of Action and to evaluate its successes and shortcomings.

Dominica and other small island developing States attach great importance to the International Meeting. We hope that it will galvanize the international community to make a greater commitment to provide the critical additional resources necessary for advancing the implementation obligations of the next phase of the Programme of Action.

My country is alarmed at the rise of terrorism in the world. Indeed, as we move towards a more united world where people of different races and colours are

called upon to demonstrate greater respect and tolerance for each other, violent attempts at solutions are counterproductive and have the unintended consequence of harming mere bystanders.

The brutal and bloody terrorist acts of 11 September 2001, committed in New York City, not only had reverberations for relatives, friends and the society in general in which the brutal murders took place, but also had serious repercussions of an economic nature in places quite distant from the scene of the crime.

That notorious event had a very deleterious effect upon the Dominican economy. It drastically contracted our tourist industry, which has yet to recover fully. The focus on terrorism and the cost of complying with requirements to prevent terrorist attacks in a region that is renowned as a zone of peace are challenging our commitment to social and economic development.

Every cent spent on addressing this threat is a cent taken from our campaign to sustain the fight against trafficking in narcotic drugs and human beings, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases and the degradation of our common environment. Water security, food security, energy security and health security are other important goals that stand to suffer if additional resources are not found to pursue them.

Conflicts in various parts of the world are consuming scarce resources that are critically needed for development and poverty alleviation. On the African continent, civil conflicts in the Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are having catastrophic consequences for the lives of large numbers of people. The continuing attention and support of the international community remain important prerequisites in the pursuit of efforts towards conflict resolution.

The Government of Dominica urges an immediate end to attempts to use violence as a solution to the problems of the people of our planet and calls for a greater degree of rationality to be employed as we address the very thorny problems of life today.

We are satisfied that the more rational approach that we are suggesting can solve many problems that have been in existence for generations. Prior to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, no one would have believed that, after years of bloodshed between the races, a post-apartheid political order could have accommodated dialogue between the races in that country. The South African example shows that when persons of good-will and intellect get together problems can be resolved without recourse to terror and violence. The United Nations has demonstrated its capacity to trigger the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the past, and my Government is persuaded that it can continue to do so if permitted.

I have the great honour to be the Prime Minister of Dominica at the age of 32. We in Dominica subscribe to the view that the young people of any country are its best hope for a brighter future, to be achieved through constructive change. My presence here attests to the commitment of the Dominican nation to treat younger generations not as inexperienced know-nothings, but as people with the potential to excel, to whom we must provide the best tools for ensuring quality leadership. We believe that the early exposure of young people to leadership and positions of responsibility would help to accelerate the process for achieving the goal of a world without prejudice.

I have sought to summarize those issues that are of special concern to small, vulnerable States such as Dominica and others in the Caribbean. In this regard, I cannot overstate the importance of the Assembly taking cognizance of some unique features of island life, particularly in the tropics.

As you are aware, Sir, at this time of the year, small island States in the Caribbean and parts of the North American continent are exposed to the threat of devastating hurricanes. This year, major disasters have occurred on several islands. Unspeakable devastation has taken place in Grenada; Jamaica has suffered substantial loss of life and damage to property; parts of the Cayman Islands were submerged, and the death toll in Haiti and Santo Domingo has been horrendous. In the United States of America, the state of Florida has experienced disaster of immense proportions. The recent experience of natural disasters underscores the importance of the necessity to put in place rehabilitation programmes that would enable destroyed economies to be revived in the minimum time.

The Government of Dominica believes that an insurance fund should be set up under the aegis of the United Nations. States at risk of natural disasters that devastate their economies ought to be able to receive insurance payments to rehabilitate their economies when they are damaged by such natural disasters.

Participation in such an insurance plan would not be a charitable act. Each Member State would be required to pay a premium that is affordable for that country, and the funds accumulated could be used to repair damage done to the economy, especially in cases where the productive sector of a country's economy has been reduced to paralysis.

Events in the last year have underscored that peace and security in the world, social progress and economic prosperity require the consensus of Member States, the strict implementation of universal norms and commitment to multilateral action.

In that regard, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti deserves the support of all Member States, especially those in the Latin American and Caribbean region. My Government has made an important decision to support the humanitarian efforts to bring stability to the people of Haiti. We remain convinced that only the full implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1542 (2004) will lead to the return of democratic governance in Haiti.

Dominica commends the United Nations for bringing visibility to the problems of the world's indigenous people during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. With the impending end of that Decade this year, we urge the world community to maintain the momentum of the Decade and renew its commitment to support the future aspirations of the world's indigenous peoples through greater contributions to the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.

Consistent with the overriding principle of pursuing universal consensus and our own national development goals, Dominica chose on 24 March 2004 to act in conformity with General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) of 1971 by establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, thereby honouring the one-China policy.

Dominica lauds the hand of friendship extended and the demonstrated commitment of the People's Republic of China to assisting small developing countries, which are hard-pressed to fulfil their social and economic agendas in the light of the adverse impact of the evolving new world order on their economies.

In the Caribbean region, as in other regions of the world, we are witnessing the devastating impact of the proliferation of small arms. As a consequence, crime rates and civil conflicts are increasing, threatening the stability and the security of developing countries such as mine. We therefore call for the early conclusion of the negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to control the indiscriminate supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Dominica's commitment to the United Nations agenda. For us, the United Nations is the embodiment of our collective will to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Given that those goals will create a new world order that the young people of the world will inherit, I urge that greater numbers of youth be involved at all levels in the decision-making process. That requires a massive educational programme to demystify international relations and motivate more young people to participate and help shape their world.

I wish delegates every success in their deliberations at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Toafa (Tuvalu): I have the greatest honour to speak on behalf of the people of Tuvalu, who wish me first of all to convey their warmest greetings to this session of the General Assembly. We also extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election and assure you of our full cooperation.

We congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, for his excellent leadership. Coming from a small island developing State ourselves, we are proud of the many achievements so ably accomplished under his presidency.

We would also like to extend our warmest gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his staff for their dedication to the work of the United Nations. The United Nations, through the Secretary-General's High Representative, participated in the Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting, held in Samoa last month, at which a new strategy for regional cooperation in the Pacific, the Pacific Plan, was considered.

That is highly commendable. Like all Forum members, Tuvalu looks forward to United Nations solidarity and support, bilaterally and through the Pacific Island Forum and other Pacific regional organizations, in order to realize that Pacific initiative.

Tuvalu is privileged and proud to be in this most indispensable body, the United Nations. Our presence here demonstrates our belief in the noble principles and goals of the United Nations. At the same time, however, we are constantly reminded of our responsibilities to all Tuvaluans, who every day worry about their future economic, cultural, environmental and long-term security and survival on our small, isolated and extremely vulnerable islands.

Tuvuluans wonder if the pride of being in the United Nations is commensurate with the many aspired needs of our people. Is there any real value of being at the United Nations to the villagers and local communities, who can barely overcome the limitations posed by the lack of opportunities, marginalization, isolation, economic exclusion and their extreme vulnerability?

It is our strong belief that to maintain its legitimacy and relevance to all, the United Nations needs to reassess its role and functions in order to better reflect the reality of today's world, in line with its principle of sovereign, equitable participation and representation. We therefore support ongoing reforms in the work of the United Nations. In particular, we support the increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council. Expansion, in our view, should be considered on the basis of responsible contribution to international development and peace, and in this vein we would support the allocation of a permanent seat to Japan. We also believe more equitable representation of the developing countries in the non-permanent seats of the Council is vital and long overdue.

Security challenges continue to create worldwide havoc, fear and uncertainty. Terrorist acts, including the unfortunate seizure of a school in Russia, have proven the continued existence of forces bent on undermining the United Nations founding goals of freedom, peace and security. They have also underscored the urgency with which we, the United Nations, must collectively combat these forces.

Tuvalu is fully committed to joining the fight against international terrorism as required by Security Council resolutions. But we would need to seek the assistance of the United Nations and the international community to help us fulfil those requirements, particularly the reporting requirements of those resolutions and of the international anti-terrorism conventions.

Tuvalu recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in relation to the social and economic development and security of Tuvalu and other Pacific island countries. Given our exposure and the level of mobility of our communities, particularly our seafarers who serve on merchant ships worldwide, there is an urgent need for assistance from the international community, such as that provided under the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in order to combat the threats of the epidemic.

As is widely acknowledged, a serious challenge to Tuvalu and to all small island developing States is our unique vulnerability to external forces. That vulnerability arises not from our own actions but simply from our being islands with small economies, our isolation, our fragmentation and the fragility of our natural environments. These factors taken together translate into significant constraints on development and a severe lack of capacity to cope with the many changes taking place in the world, especially through globalization.

Yet for us in small island developing States, although we witness daily the forces of trade, communications and travel creating a single global community, the problems associated with poverty, lack of opportunity, marginalization and environmental decline continue to plague our efforts. There is a genuine need for the United Nations and the international community to better recognize the special

and unique circumstances of small island developing States and their aspirations to participate more equitably in a globalized world.

Sustainable development, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable developing States, is most crucial. In June, Tuvalu undertook a comprehensive review of its development priorities and adopted a national sustainable development strategy that we call "The Tuvalu Vision 2015", premised on international development agendas, including the review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and aimed at building Tuvalu's resilience in coping with the challenges it faces.

The promotion of good governance, democratic principles and respect for the rule of law is strongly recognized as fundamental to the successful implementation of that strategy. We acknowledge with greatest appreciation the generous support of the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy and the Republic of China on Taiwan, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Asian Development Bank in that exercise. We look forward to partnering with them, and with others in the international community, in the realization of that strategy.

As a poorly resourced small island developing State and a least developed country as well, even our best efforts to escape the cycle of poverty and marginalization are doomed to failure without the meaningful support of the international community, civil society and the private sector. The Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation have all provided clear road maps for partnerships towards sustainable development. The signposts offered under these road maps will remain mere rhetoric unless they translate into real developments, responsive to the unique needs of small island developing States such as Tuvalu.

It is for these reasons that full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is ever so crucial. Tuvalu is very encouraged by the progress so far achieved in the review of the Programme.

However, success in the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action will depend entirely on a better appreciation of the unique situation of small island developing States such as Tuvalu, easier access to and the provision of adequate financial and technical resources, development aid and the dissemination of appropriate technology, particularly for new and renewable energy and capacity-building.

In terms of natural resources, Tuvalu is truly a small island country in a big ocean. The Pacific Ocean surrounding our islands provides the vital source of our livelihoods and our economic and social development. Increasingly, however, we are concerned with the real threats of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and of ocean pollution from waste, particularly from the trans-shipment of highly radioactive and toxic materials through our region. We seek the understanding of the international community to help us save our oceans and support fully the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy adopted by our Government leaders in 2002.

The overall decline in overseas development assistance in real terms is cause for serious concern. The failure of developed countries to fulfil the United Nations minimum target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product in overseas development assistance to small island developing States translates into lower economic growth as well as a further widening development gap for small island developing States such as Tuvalu. This needs to be addressed urgently.

An important source of financial flows to developing countries, particularly to small island developing States such as Tuvalu, is migrant workers' remittances from developed countries. Indeed, remittances from our overseas workers, and particularly Tuvaluan seafarers serving abroad, provide a substantial source of income, which is so vital for social and economic development in Tuvalu. Tuvalu fully supports giving urgent international attention to the issue of migrant workers' rights, including the maintenance of international standards specifying minimum requirements for certificates of competency and provisions for the safety and security of migrant workers, in order to ensure the continuation of this vital source of capital for SIDS.

The international meeting in Mauritius in January must result in a stronger commitment from the international community and in pragmatic and doable actions on the ground in all small island developing States.

An issue of continuing concern to Tuvalu is the question of the representation of the Republic of China

on Taiwan in the United Nations. Regrettably, this Organization cannot be said to be universal without the rightful representation of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Tuvalu feels that the active and responsible participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in world affairs — especially in trade, commerce and international development — without representation in the United Nations is unjust and morally wrong and needs to be corrected.

We in Tuvalu, a mere three meters above sea level, live in constant fear of the adverse impact of climate change and the rising sea level. Our livelihoods and sources of food security are already badly affected. With increased ground water salinity, land erosion and coral bleaching, we experience total anxiety. The threat is real and serious and is like a slow and insidious form of terrorism against Tuvalu.

Tuvalu, therefore, accords significant importance to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, as they provide the most appropriate global framework to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We congratulate the Framework Convention secretariat as the Convention marks its tenth anniversary this year. However, we are deeply concerned by the failure and the lack of leadership on the part of industrialized countries in the implementation of commitments and in the ratification and enforcing of the Kyoto Protocol.

We in small island developing States recognize that all nations must take steps to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions at some stage. However, Tuvalu believes that the Kyoto Protocol must be the first step in this direction for now and for setting the way forward in the future. The Protocol as such must enter into force without delay. However, the industrialized countries must act first as it is their legacy of emissions that is creating the problems of today. Actions must also include assisting small island developing States in their adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change, particularly in terms of urgently providing adequate financial and technical resources in line with the responsibilities and obligations under the Framework Convention.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the Framework Convention, and as we begin to explore future actions against climate change and sea-level rise, we appeal for more attention from the United Nations, whose raison d'être is to ensure world peace and security, and for stronger leadership by the international community against this global threat.

In conclusion, we want to say that efforts aimed at the sustainable development of small island States like Tuvalu will have no meaning unless the issue of climate change and sea level is addressed decisively and with urgency. Tuvalu's interest in enforcing Kyoto is not self-serving. The more serious consequences of not acting now, as we are already witnessing the world over, will be felt everywhere.

It is our hope that, out of this common house of our United Nations family, there will emerge better understanding and goodwill for the long-lasting security and survival of Tuvalu, of SIDS and of the whole world.

God bless the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda): I stand before the General Assembly of the United Nations with an equal measure of pride and humility.

Of the more than 190 nations that make up the United Nations, Antigua and Barbuda is among the smallest in population and land mass. In the face of these strikingly modest statistics, my humility in standing at this renowned and universally respected podium will be readily understood. The fact that

Antigua and Barbuda is accorded the privilege to address the United Nations today is obvious cause for pride.

On a personal note, I have just completed my first six months as Prime Minister in the first term of the party that was elected to govern Antigua and Barbuda on 23 March of this year. It is, therefore, a particular pleasure and a special personal privilege for me to be afforded this opportunity to take the podium at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for the kind sentiments he graciously extended on the formation of my Government. Considering that a single party had ruled Antigua and Barbuda throughout the life of our 23-year old nation, and for some considerable time prior to that, my leadership and my Government are still in a tender state of infancy. I therefore trust that, should I be guilty of any lapse in protocol during my remarks, you will blame it on my innocence.

The removal of a long-entrenched Government makes 2004 a year of dramatic change and intimidating challenge for Antigua and Barbuda. The United Nations human development index ranks Antigua and Barbuda in the high development scale. By virtue of our per-capita income, Antigua and Barbuda is designated a middle-income country.

Though it is self-evident that all countries are not created equal, it is a fundamental purpose of the United Nations to ensure a level playing field in the arena in which small as well as large nations of the world engage one another. I say this despite overwhelming empirical evidence that size and might often come into play without subtlety, without apology and sometimes without sufficiently vigorous challenge in the affairs of the United Nations.

The structure of the Security Council dramatizes the reality that one nation, one vote, still has its limitations. In this context, we might be tempted to accept, as Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipul asserts in the opening line of his book, *A Bend in the River*: "The world is what it is". I submit that the overarching mission of the United Nations is to defy the status quo and to work unrelentingly to transform the world from what it is into what it can be. The logical and particularly relevant concomitance to all of this is that a fundamental function of the United Nations is to assist small Member States like Antigua and Barbuda to be all that we can be. We recognize that the United Nations has been making every conceivable effort to meet this mandate, most notably so under the stewardship of our indomitable Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

Not surprisingly, small societies like those of the English-speaking Caribbean have become casualties, not beneficiaries, of globalization and of the new world economic order. The United Nations acknowledged this in the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration concedes that, while globalization offers great opportunities, its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed. It recognized that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to the challenges of globalization.

The Millennium Declaration defined the need for policies and measures at the global level that correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and that are formulated and implemented with their effective participation. It recognized a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. It affirmed a determination to deal comprehensively and effectively with the debt problems of low and middle-income developing countries through various national and international measures designed to make their debt sustainable in the long term.

Still, the reality confronts us that the views of all other United Nations Member States are outweighed by those of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Moreover, the world saw, not all that long ago, effective marginalization of the United Nations in defiance of rational concerns, strongly expressed, of the general membership of the United Nations. I have no desire to be trampled underfoot by the elephants engaged in the historic battle that raged in this forum before it moved to its still active theatre in the Middle East earlier this year. I am, however, compelled to wonder by what process the United Nations appears to have ruled out a negotiated resolution of the ongoing war in Iraq as an option.

It is lamentable that, in meeting the unique needs of vulnerable small States and microeconomies, the United Nations is routinely sidelined in international trading relationships and development processes. The United Nations is not recognized as a key catalyst in defining the world economic order and international

trading arrangements in the twenty-first century. That agenda is understood to be directed by entities such as the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Financial Action Task Force, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Two of those organizations are assemblies of a small number of wealthy nations that do not necessarily attach adequate priority to the vulnerability of small States and economies in transition.

We are not all convinced that those organizations, whose decisions can well determine the destiny of small States like Antigua and Barbuda — and the now desolate Grenada and Haiti — are sufficiently responsive to the special needs of small Caribbean States.

Indeed, the instances in which small countries of the Caribbean have been targets of the OECD and the mighty United States are vivid in our consciousness. Super Power intervention in traditional arrangements between Europe and the Caribbean for bananas and sugar has been no less devastating, and it has certainly been farther reaching than Hurricane Ivan's savage demolition of Grenada. The OECD offensive against what were termed "harmful tax jurisdictions", manifestly discriminated against international financial centres in the Caribbean. Our responses to this challenge were responsible and effective.

We would like to think that the English-speaking Caribbean countries are model nations in the family of man. We represent a zone of peace in a world shattered by internecine and international wars. We maintain exemplary parliamentary democracies. With a few sad exceptions, we in the Caribbean change our Governments by the ballot, and by no other means.

Though we are small, we are overwhelming in human worth. The Commonwealth Caribbean gave Bob Marley to the world. We gave Nobel Laureates Arthur Lewis, Derek Walcott and Vidia Naipaul to the world. We have given our music to the world in the form of reggae, calypso, soca and steel band. We have enriched the cuisines of the world. We have given the fastest female track athletes to the world. We have contributed to the standard of academia around the world through the export of many of our finest minds.

We have been blessed with the most desirable beaches in the world, and we welcome the world to share our beaches and our incomparable natural environment. Our islands represent green points of light on a globe convulsed by callous attitudes to the environment among certain developed countries, and among countries in transition, as well.

Small though our nations may be, we are mighty warriors in strong and effective alliances with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other nations in the war against the international narcotics syndicates.

I deem it my country's civic responsibility to remind this body of our duty to fulfil our role as outlined in the preamble of the United Nations Charter, to be the central area for harmonizing the actions of nations in achieving international cooperation in solving issues of a humanitarian nature.

Today two nations within the Caribbean region, Grenada and Haiti, have been devastated by natural disaster. Some 90 per cent of Grenada's housing stock has been destroyed. Civil society is in deep trauma. The economy has been wiped out and the Government is completely immobilized. This means that there is an ineffective authority.

More than 1,000 persons have just died in Haiti in the wake of Hurricane Jean, with the figure expected to double in days. The dead are being buried in mass graves to prevent a health epidemic. Homes and crops have been destroyed, with floodwater lines on buildings measuring up to 10 feet high. Survivors in Haiti's third largest city, Gonaives, are hungry, thirsty and increasingly desperate. United Nations peacekeepers and aid agencies are stretched to the limit.

Grenada and Haiti are now suffering a condition comparable to a massive military bombardment. Against this backdrop, I urge the United Nations — every nation, large and small — to intervene in those two Caribbean countries devastated by recent hurricanes. They are certifiable disaster areas.

An adequate response from all of us, and even more so from the developed countries, to the plight of Grenada and Haiti would be a quantum leap to recovery and reconstruction for them and the best option to ease the suffering of their battered and distressed people. We must act quickly. We must act now.

If I may be so bold, I would like to say that my country, Antigua and Barbuda, is a veritable United Nations in microcosm. It has become home to a relatively larger proportion of immigrants from Caribbean countries than has any other Caribbean

State. On any day, on any street in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda's capital, you will hear virtually every Caribbean inflection, English and Hispanic. You will also hear accents from China, Syria, Lebanon, Europe and Africa. Indeed, we are celebrating Antigua and Barbuda's unique diversity with the construction of a Caribbean Festival Park that will be a permanent showcase and celebration of the essence of the entire Caribbean region.

I have chosen to use this opportunity to urge the United Nations General Assembly to petition powerful nations and agencies of the world for a review of the policy of penalizing small States that achieve a measure of success in the process of guiding their economies to growth and their citizens to better lives. Is it not ironic that, only in the area of development funding, achieving "graduation" is rewarded with punishment? Development funding dries up; technical aid is more difficult to access when small States begin to show signs of prosperity. The effect of this is really to pull out the carpet from under small States the moment they stand up. Small developing States will never be insulated against external shocks.

The international security measures mandated by America's post-9/11 Patriot Act have inflicted an inordinate financial burden on the small economies of Caribbean member States. We have been compelled to finance security infrastructure for which we had no provisions. With intensified security concerns in the United States, Caribbean countries are confronted with increasing waves of deported felons from the United States. This carries the risk that, among these deportees, there might well be prime recruits for organized crime and narco-trafficking. Caribbean societies are simply not equipped to respond effectively to those challenges.

Among member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, Antigua and Barbuda is considered to be relatively affluent. The grim reality is that Antigua and Barbuda is confronted with an economy that has been experiencing sustained decline. The country has been accumulating crippling debt. We are uncovering disturbing levels of unemployment, particularly among our young people. This can well place a significant proportion of our youth at serious risk.

Many of these concerns are common to small States of the Caribbean. Policies and rules are made in organizations controlled by the powerful few. This brings us to the contradiction that, as small States strive to be all that we can be, we are penalized for our success.

Policy makers in the developed world, donor countries and multilateral donor agencies should not take our natural and physical attributes as barometers of our economic and social development.

In this age of globalization, where the emphasis is on bigness, being small is definitely a disadvantage of major magnitude. Small economies cannot easily diversify production. Jobs are concentrated in a limited number of industries — namely, agriculture, tourism and services. Tragically, we are now encountering a situation where our unemployed young people are easily induced into the drug trade.

Given that the Caribbean region is a recognized drug trans-shipment point between Latin America and the United States and Europe, the attraction of easy money and effective marketing to youth by drug dons make this job opportunity very attractive to the youth of the Caribbean region.

My party, the United Progressive Party, campaigned on a platform of transparency, accountability and integrity in every functional aspect of government, and throughout the society as a whole. As a demonstration of my Government's seriousness in combating corruption, I tabled anticorruption and integrity legislation in our Parliament during our first six months in Government.

My Government and the majority of the people of Antigua and Barbuda are committed to every option that will support our dedication to good governance in our country.

I challenge the United Nations to stand by the tenets of the Millennium Declaration, which call for equity among nations, large and small. There is a compelling reason for this call.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries are currently engaged in three separate sets of negotiations that will seriously impact the economies of our countries and the welfare of our people. To date, there have been no concessions afforded to the special needs of small States in our negotiations with the European Union, on the Free Trade Area of the Americas and with the World Trade Organization. Not everyone engaged in these negotiations appears to be in sympathy with the fundamental goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

If affirmative action is not to be proffered to Antigua and Barbuda and other small States of the Caribbean region and the world, let us at least be spared punitive suspension of whatever special facilities enabled us to move our economies forward.

Antigua and Barbuda thanks this General Assembly for the opportunity to propose that, in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, small States, such as those of CARICOM, should be afforded the promised opportunity to be beneficiaries of globalization and the new world economic architecture, instead of leaving us casualties, as we must now be accurately described.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, I have the pleasure to extend my most sincere congratulations and best wishes to you and your friendly country of Gabon on the occasion of your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to wish you every success in your work. May I take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the friendly country of Saint Lucia, for the intensive efforts he exerted during his presidency of the last session.

I also would like to take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the great efforts he has made to enhance and strengthen the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

Since the signing of the Charter in 1945 in San Francisco, the United Nations has played a vital role in addressing many international political, economic, social and humanitarian issues.

Our world today is witnessing the interlinking of different issues in politics and in regional and international security with other issues of development, the environment, culture, women and human rights. As a result, international interests have become interwoven and the distinction between local and international questions has almost vanished in light of the spread of globalization. People need the United Nations now more than they did a half a century ago. With newly developed understanding, they have a greater day-to-day need to keep up with the modern developments of the twenty-first century and the spirit of the age, led by multilateral diplomacy, which looks at both present and inherited problems from a new practical perspective and understanding. The idea of reforming the United Nations, including the collective security system, is indeed an ambitious one. However, we believe that its implementation is not an impossible dream but a necessity. The international community must respond, through innovative thinking, practical methods and a collective determination, in order to achieve democracy in international relations, maintain the spirit of the Charter, and devise practical solutions to national and regional conflicts and mitigate their consequences for the development process in Member States.

In that context, we would like to reiterate our support for the efforts made by the Secretary-General to reform the Organization and enhance its capacity to shoulder its responsibilities and carry out it missions.

We look forward with great interest to the report that the Secretary-General will present in December on the outcome of the meetings of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. We hope that these results and recommendations will not only meet the hopes of the peoples of the world but will also be sufficient to address the threats and problems that beset international relations on all sides.

As reform and modernization of the United Nations have become a goal for the majority of its Members, by the same token, leaders and political experts in many parts of the world, including the Arab world, have become aware that reform and modernization are important issues in their societies in order to address the demands for change and the movement of history, and that these issues must be addressed with clear-sightedness and wisdom, to meet

the hopes and aspirations of the new generation for progress and democratization.

As a result of that historic political awareness, the reform and democratization process has made great strides in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Bahrain has moved rapidly in the building of democracy and the widening of popular participation since the adoption of the National Action Charter by the people of Bahrain on 14 February 2001, and municipal and parliamentary elections in 2002.

It is clear that the call for reform and democratization, which has become an important contemporary element in international policy, has become a demand of both industrialized countries and of many developing countries as well. This year, the President of the Group of Eight invited His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the King of Bahrain, to participate in its annual Summit held in Georgia, United States, from 8 to 10 June last, in recognition of His Majesty's important role in the reform process and the building of democracy in Bahrain.

The phenomenon of terrorism is a source of concern for the international community, because of its horrific spread to many different parts of the world. Indeed, no region or country is immune. In that regard, Bahrain reaffirms its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of its sources or motivation. We reassert that there can be no justification whatsoever for terrorism, and that terrorist acts are not condoned by any religion or belief.

Bahrain has condemned, and continues to condemn, terrorist acts against countries and peoples through which innocent lives are lost, and reaffirms its solidarity with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures it has taken to overcome these criminal actions, which contradict the principles and tenets of Islam, a religion of tolerance and mercy. Bahrain also condemns and denounces all terrorist acts around the world, including the events at the school in Beslan, North Ossetia, in Russia.

In examining terrorism and its threats, it is necessary to review its causes in order to limit its destructive danger. Among those causes, we find poverty, ignorance, backwardness, unemployment, a culture of extremism, fundamentalism, ethnic prejudice, feelings of national desperation and frustration, and violations of human rights.

To address this terrorist phenomenon, and within the framework of regional and international cooperation to fight it, Bahrain and the other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) this year signed the GCC Anti-Terrorism Agreement, a further step in overcoming this scourge, which must be eradicated.

Israel is increasing its oppressive measures and practices in the occupied territories against the Palestinian people. It does not respect or comply with international law and international legality by taking areas of Palestinian land in its construction of the so-called barrier, which consolidates the occupation and the settlements, and extinguishes hopes for an independent Palestinian State — the legal and inalienable right of the Palestinian people.

The international community today must take a courageous stand in the face of these actions, in particular following the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice delivered on 9 July 2004, and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004, which represent a triumph for international legality and a clear condemnation of the building of the separation wall, which contradicts the principles of international law. The international community must use that opinion to pressure Israel to end its occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights and the Lebanese Shaba'a Farms.

The Arab countries reaffirm their commitment to the Arab peace initiative agreed at the Beirut Summit in 2002, and reaffirmed by the most recent Arab Summit in Tunis in 2004, which calls for a complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab land and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legality, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003).

We call once again on the Quartet to resume its efforts to promote the peace process, and we demand that the Government of Israel fulfil its obligations under the peace plan, as set out in the road map.

The situation in brotherly Iraq remains a continued source of concern for the countries and peoples of the region, in particular the violence and insecurity that threaten it, despite continued efforts to maintain peace, especially following the establishment of the Interim Government, which took office on 28 June 2004, and in spite of the transfer of sovereignty to Iraqi

authorities, the convening of the national conference and steps taken towards the creation of an interim National Legislative Council.

The upcoming stage requires that a vital and effective role be played by the international community, represented by the United Nations, which will bear the heavy burden of supporting the interim Iraqi Government and helping it to fulfil the tasks required of it under Security Council resolution 1546 (2004).

Bahrain has on more than one occasion expressed its support for efforts to maintain peace and security in Iraq, and to create the conditions for the reconstruction of the country and the maintenance of its unity. It also reaffirmed its willingness to participate in Arab and international efforts to rebuild Iraq and to maintain its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The security and stability of the Arab Gulf region is a matter of great concern to the Government of Bahrain, which is constantly seeking peace and stability in a region that has suffered greatly during the past three decades. The Kingdom of Bahrain, which is a member of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to work to peacefully resolve the issue of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, either through serious bilateral negotiations aimed at an agreement between the two neighbouring countries or by arbitration.

Given the Kingdom of Bahrain's follow-up of efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation and to re-establish stability in important regions of the Arab world, we welcomed the Naivasha Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army. We are anxious to see an end to the civil war there, which has taken a great toll in terms of human life and material resources. Bahrain also welcomed the agreement between the Sudan and the United Nations aimed at ending the bloodshed in the Darfur region, as well as the steps taken by the Sudanese Government to implement its obligations in accordance with the agreement that it signed with the Secretary-General on 3 July.

Bahrain also expresses its support for the efforts of the African Union, which is working with the Sudanese Government with a view to resolving the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. We affirm the importance of respecting the Sudan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We call on the Security Council to give the Government of the Sudan sufficient time to deal with the crisis and offer the necessary financial assistance to bring it to an end.

Mr. Khan (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today more than ever we are committed to the principles and purposes of the Charter. We now have a deeper understanding of the need for a modernized and more advanced Organization that is capable of taking part in collective international action, of responding to the changes and challenges of the twenty-first century and of ensuring greater democracy in international relations, equal rights among the peoples of the world and equal sovereignty among States. It must also be able to arrive at solutions for problems that may occur in the future on the basis of international partnership, so that any as yet unforeseen challenges facing humanity in the coming decades can be dealt with.

Past mistakes and current failures should not divert us from our ambitions for a better future — a future free from the scourge of war, a future of peace and justice, where human rights and the dignity of the individual are respected; a future where resources are developed and where society can progress, where greed has been eliminated and where countries cooperate within an advanced international order that promotes the rule of law and disseminates the values of human rights, generosity and justice, without prejudice, arrogance or discrimination.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ban (Republic of Korea): I would like first of all to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his assumption of the presidency of General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I have every confidence that he will meet with distinction the challenges of his eminent office. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, as well as to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The past year has been marked by a series of atrocious terrorist attacks. The stark reality is that no people or nation is safe from the spectre of international terrorism. Through their cowardly acts, terrorists seek to generate chaos and fear, raining violence upon the innocent — even children, as we so

painfully and clearly witnessed in the recent tragedy in Beslan, Russia. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere sympathy to all those affected by terrorist attacks around the world.

The Republic of Korea has been no exception in its exposure to heinous terrorist attacks. In particular, we experienced, with deep sorrow and pain, the loss of a Korean — a victim of such savagery — in Iraq in June this year. There can be no justification whatsoever for such brutality and cruel disregard for human life. That inhuman act has only bolstered our determination to rid the world of the dark cloud of terrorism. The Republic of Korea remains firm in its conviction that the international community must never give in to the demands of terrorists.

The fight against terrorism calls for unity in the international community, with the United Nations in the lead, as well as the enhanced ability of each individual Member State to combat terrorism.

Iraq still remains a very pressing security concern for the international community. The inauguration of an interim Government and the transfer of sovereignty set in motion the process of political transition towards a new era of democracy for the Iraqi people. The United Nations has a wealth of experience to offer Iraq in the process of its political normalization and national rehabilitation. The transition cannot proceed smoothly, however, without the restoration of order. To that end, the assistance of the international community is vital.

The Republic of Korea has been actively participating in international efforts to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq. We strongly believe that stability in Iraq is vital for peace and security in the Middle East and beyond. In implementation of Security Council resolutions 1511 (2003) and 1546 (2004), we are in the process of dispatching 3,600 troops to the multinational forces in Iraq. The aim of this is to assist the Iraqi people's efforts aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction. We have also pledged to contribute $260 million to that end, focusing on areas such as health, education, capacity-building, job creation and the provision of electricity.

Terrorism lends renewed urgency to our common endeavour to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In particular, this year's revelations about a nuclear black-market network in Asia have alerted the international community to the danger of nuclear weapons falling into terrorist hands. Faced with this new kind of threat to nuclear non-proliferation, the international community must work to close the loopholes in the existing non-proliferation regime. Against that backdrop, my Government strongly supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation, adopted by the Council in April this year.

The Republic of Korea has actively participated in the efforts of the international community in the non-proliferation field. In February this year, we became the thirty-ninth country to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement. In June, we joined the Group of Eight (G8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction in order to support joint efforts to stem the spread of deadly arsenals. We held the chairmanship of the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the year 2003-2004, and we will also host the plenary meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime in Seoul next month. These are just a few facts that attest to my Government's unwavering commitment to the cause of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Given such a solid commitment on our part, my Government reported the recent discoveries about past scientific experiments involving nuclear materials in my country pursuant to the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The experiments were isolated, laboratory-scale research activities that a few scientists conducted on their own for purely experimental purposes. In good faith and with full transparency, my Government has been providing full cooperation to the IAEA in its activities to review and verify our declarations on nuclear research activities.

Renewing and reaffirming our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the Government of the Republic of Korea announced the following "Four Principles for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy" on 18 September 2004.

First, the Republic of Korea reaffirms that it has no intention of developing or possessing nuclear weapons. Secondly, the Republic of Korea will firmly maintain nuclear transparency and will strengthen our cooperation with the international community to this end. Thirdly, the Republic of Korea will faithfully abide by the norms set out in agreements on nuclear non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Fourthly, on the basis of international trust and with the highest level of transparency, the Republic of Korea will continue to expand the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

I would now like to turn to one of the most important tasks that lie ahead: resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. The Government of the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in the efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to this issue through the six-party talks process. The Republic of Korea firmly believes that the expeditious resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is in the best interests of all the participants in the six-party talks, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The resolution of this issue will certainly have a positive impact on the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It will also have a profound effect on the relations between North Korea and the other countries participating in the six-party talks.

Upon the resolution of the nuclear issue, North Korea would indeed be able to become a full-fledged member of the international community, enabling it to gain all the accompanying benefits. It is our fervent wish that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will make a strategic decision to forgo all its nuclear-weapon programmes, including its uranium enrichment programmes, in a thorough and transparent manner. The Government of the Republic of Korea also strongly hopes that the fourth round of talks will be held as soon as possible, so that we can engage in substantive discussions on concrete steps toward the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

While seeking a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue, the Korean Government is working hard to ensure the steady improvement of inter-Korean relations. Indeed, Government-level meetings have been institutionalized and as many as 90 such meetings have been held over the past two years. Impressive progress is also being made on major projects for economic cooperation. In particular, the start of operations at the Gaesong industrial complex, scheduled for later this year, will be a significant achievement in inter-Korean cooperation.

As a result of such efforts, we believe that inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation have now advanced to a point from which there is no turning back. The rise of such inter-Korean interaction and interdependence will certainly contribute to peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula and beyond.

There are no easy answers to the many problems the world now faces, and poverty is at the top of that list. The roots of poverty run deep, with no simple solution in sight. A large part of the human population still languishes in abject poverty, presenting a serious stumbling block to the achievement of our shared goal of lasting peace and prosperity for all.

Four years ago, the leaders of the world pledged to reduce by half the proportion of people living in poverty and hunger by the year 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals. However, at this point, the gap between the objectives and the tangible progress we have made remains wide. It is our sincere hope that the 2005 high-level meeting to review the progress made in the implementation of the Goals will serve to renew our commitment to the world's poor. Political will is the key.

Over the past year, the United Nations has continued its efforts to realize our common aspirations for the promotion of human rights, freedom and well-being. While persevering in its quest to make human rights universal, the United Nations has exerted special efforts to enable the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings to enjoy the rights and freedoms that should be guaranteed to all. In particular, much progress has been made in the endeavours to draft a convention to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Government of the Republic of Korea strongly supports global action to strengthen the values of human rights and democracy around the world. Just last week in Seoul, we organized a seminar on good governance practices for the promotion of human rights, in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme.

Next year in Seoul, my Government will also host the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, in cooperation with the United Nations. We are convinced that this Forum will serve as a useful venue for the exchange of experience in Government innovations aimed at enhancing participation and transparency in governance.

We also support the United Nations in reaching out to people in distress in many corners of the world

and providing life-saving assistance to millions of refugees and others displaced by conflicts and natural disasters. We share the concern of the international community over the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Darfur, Sudan. Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) should be implemented so as to bring back peace and stability to this troubled area and its inhabitants.

Furthermore, all too often, the complexities of major crises have been fuelled by the public health emergency created by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In order to overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS, it is vital that we strengthen the global assistance mechanisms. In this regard, the 3 by 5 Initiative of the World Health Organization, aimed at providing antiretroviral treatment to 3 million infected people by the year 2005, is a very timely and proactive initiative.

For almost six decades, the United Nations has played a crucial role in merging the diverse interests of our Member States for the global good. As the international community becomes more interdependent and areas of cooperation expand further in the twenty-first century, the world body will have an even greater role to play.

Meanwhile, doubts have been expressed as to whether the current United Nations system is suitable for confronting the challenges of the new century. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, the United Nations has come to a fork in the road. Choices must be made if the United Nations is to be strengthened and made more effective.

In that regard, the Republic of Korea hopes that the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change established on the recommendation of the Secretary-General will identify the challenges the international community faces and recommend ways to deal with them effectively. We look forward to the Panel's report and hope that its recommendations will shed light on ways to make the United Nations more effective and responsive to the needs of the twenty-first century.

No doubt, continued reform of the United Nations will be an important part of our discussions. In particular, the Security Council, as the primary organ for maintaining peace and security, must be reformed in such a way as to make it more representative and democratic than it is today. In that regard, we share the view that the Security Council should be expanded to adequately reflect the increase in the membership of the United Nations during the past decades. Expansion of the Security Council should be designed to enable more countries to participate in the Council more often, and on the basis of a more equitable geographical distribution. In that spirit, we support an increase in non-permanent members so as to accord to those Member States willing and able to contribute to international peace and security greater opportunities to serve in the Council.

As diverse as they are, there is a common thread that holds together all the views expressed in this honourable Hall. We are all united in the goal of seeking a better and more peaceful world. Now more than ever, countries are called to rise to challenges together, as Members of our one global body. The Republic of Korea stands firm in its hopes for and belief in the United Nations as the steadfast anchor for our collective endeavours and remains as committed as ever to fully playing its part in all areas of its noble work.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): First, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, on his election as the President of the General Assembly.

We meet in New York under conditions of high security. All over the world, Governments, corporations and individuals are allocating vast resources to combat terrorism. The Beslan massacre last month and the Jakarta bombing two weeks ago remind us once again that the war against terrorism is a long struggle. Fighting it requires us to cooperate worldwide. It is also important for us to understand more deeply why terrorists are prepared to sacrifice their own lives to take the lives of others, including those of innocent children.

The human condition has not changed. There is in human beings a restless, competitive spirit that strives to get ahead, make discoveries and order or reorder the world according to their values and world-view. It is a drive that can lead to great good or great evil.

The greatest evil is often committed out of a sense of self-righteousness. That has been the case throughout history. Al Qaeda carries out its actions in the name of Islam, which is a gross perversion. Religious wars are the most cruel because human beings are maimed and killed in the name of the divine. Ethnic and ideological conflicts sometimes turn

genocidal when one side believes that right is completely on its side.

Unrestrained economic competition can also lead to grave injustice. Without rules, ruthless economic competition will return us to the jungle. Without the World Trade Organization (WTO), globalization can become a tool with which the strong can dominate the weak, just as in an earlier period entire continents were carved up by imperial Powers.

Global organizations like the United Nations and WTO give us hope that this century can be more civilized than previous ones. We need rules that put limits on our competitiveness in the political and economic arenas. As in the Olympic Games, clear rules and their rigorous enforcement enable individuals to compete fiercely and triumph within a framework of sportsmanship and fairness. The rules are not there to dampen our natural competitive spirit, but to direct it towards positive achievement.

But the rules have to be determined by common agreement. Their legitimacy is derived from the shared values that bind participants together. They have to evolve, along with our evolving sense of what is fair and proper. They cannot be imposed. If they are imposed, what we have will not be the Olympics but the gladiatorial pits of the Roman Colosseum.

At the most fundamental level, discussions and debates in the United Nations and WTO are really about the values that bind us together as human beings. As the world grows smaller, our sense of interdependence grows. As we interact more, we discover that we are more similar than we think. So many problems like global warming, epidemics and terrorism can only be overcome if we work together. So many new opportunities can only be fully exploited if we combine our efforts.

Yes, we have become closer. We celebrated together when for the first time the human genome was mapped a few years ago. We grieved as one on 11 September 2001. The slaughter of children at Beslan outraged us all. But will we ever be the same? That is not possible. It is neither in our biological nature nor in the nature of the historical process for human societies to converge and become identical. Even the same society changes over time in response to changing conditions.

There is in each and everyone of us a deep desire to be free, to experiment and to be better than others around us. Like all forms of energy, human energy must be channelled so that it is constructive and not destructive. That is the challenge of governance at all levels, from the village all the way to global institutions. With the world becoming a village because of the ease of travel and instant communication, the design of global institutions is very important. They help us solve problems which we cannot solve individually and set limits on acceptable behaviour.

The problem of Palestine, for example, cannot be solved without the participation of the larger global community. All of us are aware of the rights and wrongs, and sometimes particular issues are right or wrong, depending on our perspective. However, we should never lose hope. We should always look for new and creative ways to break old deadlocks. After all, it was only a few years ago that the prospects for peace seemed so much brighter.

I remember when, as Singapore's Trade Minister, I met the Israeli Trade Minister at Davos in the year 2000. He said that he would like to visit me in Singapore with his Palestinian counterpart and, together with me, to take a boat to the Singapore industrial park on a nearby Indonesian island, where he hoped that we could all be received by the Indonesian Trade Minister. I was inspired and immediately worked with my Indonesian counterpart on this project of understanding and goodwill. Unfortunately, within half a year, the intifada began and the cycle of violence became steadily worse. It all seems such a long time ago. However, we must never give up. With goodwill and statesmanship on both sides, and with the support of all of us in the international community, it is possible to re-establish trust and to start again.

Moreover, the international community should not allow the deteriorating relationship across the Taiwan Straits to spin out of control. The push towards independence by certain groups on Taiwan is most dangerous, because it will lead to war with mainland China and will drag in other countries. The stability of the entire Asia-Pacific region is at stake. Not many years ago, the relationship between the mainland and Taiwan was much better. In 1991, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) — a grouping of economies around the Pacific Ocean — admitted China, Taiwan and Hong Kong on the basis of certain agreed principles. At an APEC meeting in 1992, I remember joining the Trade Ministers of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong for a relaxed lunch in Bangkok. Later, in 1993,

representatives from China and Taiwan met in Singapore for informal talks, with both sides acknowledging, "One China: to each its own interpretation".

All problems seemed soluble then. But, in 1994, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui gave a shocking interview to a Japanese magazine, describing himself as a Moses leading his people out of Egypt. From then on, cross-straits relations went from bad to worse as pro-independence forces on Taiwan became increasingly adventurous. As in the Middle East, the international community has a strong vested interest in supporting a peaceful resolution of cross-straits conflict, based on the "one China" position that was adopted and settled by the United Nations in 1971.

Even when the United Nations has no legal authority to enforce its wishes, its views carry moral weight. This legitimacy of the Organization is derived from its broad membership, its transparent processes and the active participation of Member States. It is important that the Security Council — which has the power to adopt resolutions binding on all United Nations Member States — be reformed and enlarged so as to reflect the reality of the current international environment.

We need rules that enable us to make decisions and to express our collective judgement of right and wrong, and those rules must evolve in response to new challenges. However, we cannot expect unanimity of views on all matters. Human society is changing all the time. New scientific discoveries present new challenges, to which different societies must respond differently. On matters of religious belief, for example, no one should expect convergence. Our disagreements over issues like the death penalty, abortion, the nature of democracy, gay rights, animal rights and therapeutic cloning are, in a sense, inevitable and necessary.

What we profoundly need is respect for plurality in the world — respect built on the common substrate that defines us as civilized human beings in the twenty-first century. In the nineteenth century, slavery was abolished. In the twentieth century, gender equality became the norm. In this century, we must add more layers to what we share in common. And, upon that shared substrate, we should not only accept diversity, but encourage it. Indeed, as with biological diversity, it is essential for human progress that there should be cultural and political diversity in the world. Without such diversity, our ability to respond to new challenges will be weakened.

For all their imperfections, the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO) represent this diversity in unity. At the WTO, the process of multilateral trade negotiations — however complicated and arduous they may be — is still a more civilized method of resolving conflicts and harmonizing national differences than erecting protectionist walls and fighting trade wars.

Respecting plurality does not mean that we stop recognizing strengths and weaknesses; that would be hypocrisy. Some cultural values are more suited than others to modern times. Some economic systems are more productive. Some political systems are better able to mobilize the creative energies of their people. But none of us should force our views on others. We should never impose a particular political or economic system on societies with different histories and traditions. What we need instead is an environment that encourages mutual learning and healthy competition. For that, we need to respect one another.

As is recognized in the Millennium Development Goals, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenge of human development. When Singapore became independent in 1965, there was no ready solution that fitted us; we had to seek our own way forward. Many countries helped us with aid and advice, and we remain grateful to them. The United Nations Development Programme provided valuable assistance. With no natural resources, we had to organize ourselves in a practical way, add value and be of service to others. Little by little, we worked out pragmatic solutions to our problems. Good governance was a precondition for all our efforts. We were tough on corruption and crime.

When, in the 1970s, we witnessed attempts by international drug dealers to target young Singaporeans, our Parliament adopted draconian laws. We were criticized by some of our friends in the Western media, but we persisted, with the support of the majority of Singaporeans, always acting with their consent and in their interests. Now that we have reached a reasonable standard of economic development, other developing countries have approached us for assistance. We feel honoured to be asked. But we prefer them to see Singapore more as an ongoing experiment to be studied than as a model to follow. Every country is different, and each must customize its own solutions.

Small countries like Singapore need a stable external environment. We are ardent supporters of international organizations like the United Nations and the WTO, because they give us, together with other countries, a say in global governance. A world in which countries big and small can resolve disputes according to commonly agreed rules is infinitely preferable to one in which might makes right.

More than four centuries ago, a wise man from the West visited the East. The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci went to China with the goal of converting China to Catholicism. He had a deep respect for the civilization that he wanted to Christianize. Realizing that the only way to impress the Chinese was to interact with them on their own terms, he proceeded to study the Chinese language, to master the Chinese classics and to employ Chinese philosophical concepts in his discourses on Christianity. Instead of talking at the Chinese, he talked to them, expressing concepts to which they could relate. Although Matteo Ricci did not succeed in converting the Chinese, he left behind a lasting legacy, and when he died the Chinese Emperor consented to his burial in China. His tomb, inscribed with his Chinese name, is to be found today in the compound of the Party School of the Beijing Municipal Committee.

History is unending. We need wise men like Matteo Ricci from the West and the East, from the South and the North, to help us, through debate and dialogue, prevent a clash of civilizations. Respecting diversity should never reduce us to hypocrisy and cultural relativism, as if all points of view are equally valid. We should never stop trying to influence one another. Here in the United Nations we are always trying to influence one another, but we must always be prepared to see the same issues from the perspectives of others. Here in the United Nations, we have an institution that can help us create this better world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): An overall and realistic review of the current developments in international relations reveals that our world today faces the formidable challenge of extremism.

Extremism has two distinct and yet interconnected faces: the violence and terrorism of non-State actors and the unbridled militarism of States. The former leads to increasing insecurity and the latter to increasing lawlessness. Insecurity is manifested in horrendous acts of extreme violence and terrorism, whether it is in Iraq, Afghanistan or Russia. Lawlessness is manifested in acting outside of international law and the United Nations Charter and relying on the glorification of force and the blatant use of military might. Lawless militarism of the powerful has given rise to increasing violence and terrorism and is also marketed as their panacea. We must be relentless against the former in a truly collective and all-inclusive manner, and we will muster the courage and national discipline to guard against the latter and remain within the confines of international law.

The increasing insecurity and escalation of acts of violence and terrorism in different parts of the world are a matter of serious concern to all of us. The recent tragic incidents in Iraq, in the school in Beslan in the Russian Federation's North Ossetia, and State terrorism in occupied Palestine have shocked and outraged all peoples worldwide. No rationale can justify the killing of children and the innocent.

As terrorism has become an international challenge, an effective fight against it requires a global approach based on collective cooperation under the provisions of the United Nations Charter as well as the principles of international law. We must rise above business-as-usual politics and avoid discrimination, double standards and selectivity in our approach to fighting this global menace. As a victim of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and we have demonstrated our strong commitment to fighting terrorism by the arrest and handover of the greatest number of Al Qaeda members apprehended by any single State to date. Our commitment fighting terrorism is unwavering. However, the prevailing international approach, which is primarily a law and order approach, is clearly failing to curb terrorism. We need to revisit our premises and try to develop a genuinely collective, inclusive, well-rounded and multidisciplinary approach, if we are serious about this fight. No State can even come close to doing it alone.

The increasing lawless militarism, the second face of the challenge we encounter, is the use of brute and unsanctioned military force to achieve some political goals, albeit desirable goals. A clear example of this lawlessness is the attack against Iraq. The attack

against Iraq was illegal. I wish to thank our distinguished Secretary-General for making this statement a few days ego and courageously defending the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of law. If we, in this body, do not collectively defend the rule of law, we have helped to send the United Nations Charter to oblivion, thereby serving domination and militarism.

We in Iran benefited greatly by the removal of Saddam Hussein. Many in Iran are joyous to see the murderer of their sons behind bars. However, as a matter of principle, and as a principle of the United Nations Charter, this cannot be regarded as anything but the fruit of the forbidden tree. The international community has demonstrated that it will not celebrate achieving this desirable goal through the illegal means of glorifying military power and rushing to use force without the approval of the United Nations.

The increasing lawlessness of States constitutes even a greater danger to our security. It undermines our collective ability to contain terrorism and violence. It offsets our efforts to promote justice, equality, freedom, dignity and prosperity for all, because, if continued, it will lower everyone's quality of life and devalue our humanity. The prevailing world realities illustrate that unbridled militarism and blind terrorism are mutually reinforcing. The international community must work together to find a way to liberate itself from this vicious cycle.

In this context, one particular area that requires resolute action by the international community is the existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As the only victim of the unbridled use of these weapons in recent years, Iran feels very strongly about the absolute imperative of a collective and rule-based multilateral campaign to eradicate all such weapons and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons as an interim measure. This must be done by the universal application of disarmament and non-proliferation instruments in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner. The relevant multilateral instruments must become truly universal and the rights and obligations of all must be scrupulously enforced. Access to technology for peaceful purposes is the only true incentive for the universality of those instruments. At the same time, the legitimate disarmament and non-proliferation concerns of the international community must be addressed through transparency and the vigorous application of monitoring mechanisms. Iran has always been prepared to contribute actively to that global effort. While we insist on our right to technology for peaceful purposes, we have left — and will leave — no stone unturned in order to provide assurances of our peaceful intentions.

Iran has been in the forefront of efforts to establish a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This initiative, which has received the repeated approval of this Assembly and the Security Council, has been systematically obstructed by Israel's intransigence and its rejection — regrettably, with impunity — of all multilateral instruments. All countries of the region and beyond are unanimous in considering the Israeli arsenal, including its weapons of mass destruction, combined with its policy and record of aggression and State terrorism, as the single greatest threat to regional and global peace and security. Israel cannot hide these facts behind smoke screens. It is time for the international community to show its resolve to maintain the credibility of multilateral disarmament instruments by taking action to compel Israel to comply.

Next year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter. The next General Assembly will receive the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Now in the final stages of preparing its report, the Panel would be well-advised to go beyond the generally advertised perceptions of threats and challenges, and to address the more fundamental malady of our age — that is, violence and the glorification of military might. Obviously, the prescription that the Panel will provide will very much depend on its own perception of threats.

In that context, the paradigm of Dialogue among Civilizations, presented by President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran and warmly received by the international community, continues to provide the only vehicle to help promote mutual understanding and facilitate cooperation among States in the pursuit of peace, tolerance, freedom and prosperity.

In 2005, coinciding with the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Charter, the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations will be reviewed. Based on the international experience gained in the period from 2001 through 2005, such a review can help the international community to further advance that paradigm as a long-term process towards promoting

peace, democracy and development — the real principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter.

We condemn all acts of violence and terrorism in Iraq. We stress the need for promoting security and preserving the unity, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq, promoting democracy through drafting a new constitution, holding free and fair elections as scheduled and accelerating the reconstruction of Iraq, as well as the speedy withdrawal of foreign forces from that country.

We welcomed the formation and supported the operation of the Iraqi transitional government as a positive step towards the restoration of the Iraqi people's sovereignty. We emphasize that the United Nations has a pivotal role to play and substantial responsibilities to discharge in the transitional period.

We also welcome the position of the United Nations Secretary-General on the important role that the neighbouring countries to Iraq can play in the restoration of peace and stability in Iraq and in its reconstruction.

In the Palestinian lands, the world is witnessing, with much regret and concern, the continued gross violation of human rights and the Israeli policy of occupation and repression against the oppressed Palestinian people.

A durable peace in Palestine will only be possible if it is based on justice and guarantees an end to the occupation of the Palestinian lands, restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, return of the people of the Palestinian diaspora to their homeland, participation of all in a democratic process and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

We are of the view that the enlightened Palestinian people are capable of independently deciding their political and social affairs and we respect their free decisions on the future of Palestine.

We welcome the valuable efforts by the Government of Afghanistan to consolidate peace, security and stability in the country. In addition, holding fair and free presidential and legislative elections and establishing a broad-based representative and multi-ethnic government, will be vital steps in the process of democratization and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Realization of the Millennium Development Goals is inseparable from viable international peace and security. Otherwise the political, social, economic and cultural problems of our world will continue to increase cumulatively, leaving us in a more desperate situation. In our view, the only option available to us is to foster closer international cooperation under internationally recognized rules and instruments in the light of dialogue, justice and democracy.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.